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ABSTRACT

A project was undertaken by a sociology class at Houston Community College, in Texas, to identify which social problems were perceived to be most important by residents of Northwest Harris County. Questionnaires were distributed to a random sample of county residents, requesting demographic information and asking respondents to rate six social problems (i.e., violence, crime, public education, drug problems, public health, and family problems) on a 5-point scale, with 5 indicating the highest level of importance. Space was also provided for respondents to write in other social problems not listed. Study findings, based on responses from 150 residents, included the following: (1) all six issues were considered important by respondents, receiving scores above the 3 midpoint; (2) violence was ranked as the most important issue at 4.56, followed by crime at 4.47, drugs at 4.16, family at 3.94, education at 3.9, and health at 3.78; (3) women rated crime, violence, and public health as more serious problems than men, while men tended to give higher ratings to public education; and (4) racial problems was the most commonly cited other issue, cited by 24 respondents. Appendixes include the survey instrument, a demographic profile of the study sample, a county map, and 10 student papers discussing the study findings. (TGI)

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A Comparative Study of Selected Social Problems: A snapshot view of which Social Problems are perceived to be most significant in the N.W. Section of Harris County, Tx

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A Class Project

Principle Researcher:

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JC 960 006

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A Comparative Study of Selected Social Problems: A snapshot view of which Social Problems are perceived to be most significant in the N.W. Section of Harris County, TX.

The researcher and his social problems class examined the perceptions of the residents of North West Harris county, Texas in regard to which social problems they perceived to be most significant in society. The researchers examined social problems that pertain to Violence, Crime, Public Education (Elementary through High school), Drug/Alcohol, Public Health issues, and problems that are family related. Also, an open ended question was used to ascertain what other problems were perceived to be important, but not addressed on the survey instrument. All possible comparisons were made across demographic variables and reported. The study concluded that respondents ranked the most significant social problems as: Violence, Crime, Drugs/Alcohol, Family, Education, and Health. Moreover, Racial related problems was the most significant among those not included on the survey.

Principle Researcher:
Dr. Clennis F. High,
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(ABSTRACT)

Organization of this Investigation

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Acknowledgments

Well, after three months and a lot of hard work by this class, we have finally put closure on this project. It has been "many moons", since I have seen an Undergraduate class show this level of interest in a class project. In the words of John Dewey, "Students Learn by doing". Based on the attitudes and interest of this Sociology, Social Problems class, I could not agree more.

Some students in this class have taken classes in research or statistics, but most have not. However, each and every student stepped up to the plate when his/her turn at bat came around. I could not be more proud of every student. Namely the students who took part in the study were:

Andrew E. Gough
Jason B. Greenwald
Brian E. Grogg
Amy L. Holmes
Heather L. Johnson
Robert L. Koss
Jennifer A. McMath
Todd Miears
Alan Rivas
Emal Sharaf
Allison P. Wichkoski

Also, I would like to thank Dr. Ken Vincent, my Department Chair, for allowing this Undergraduate class to take on a project of this magnitude. We didn't get the grant to fund this project, but with the help of good community members and others who were interested in the educational process, we pulled it off, just barely!

Dr. Clennis F. High

Section I

Introduction

If seeing is believing, then one must believe that America's social structure; all of it's institutions and its' people face very serious social problems. It has become much to frequent that we see, what use to be occasional circumstances and situations, being now very common. That is to say that many social problems that we experience today on a regular basis, were in the not to distant past only individual and isolated incidents. To coin a phrase "times have changed".

Many people believe that we have declining morals in this society, and that this is a major contributing factor to our escalating number of social problems. In addition it is the prevailing belief among others, that this society, as a result of this dilemma, will experience a major decline in world status. On the Night Line Show (09-14-95), the inspirational leader the "Dali Lama", opined that this society has many social problems because of low moral standards. In his interaction with Ted Koppel he suggested that we have a "moral crisis", in this society. To be sure, there are many views and perceptions as to the significance of the many social problems that face our society.

Although there are different beliefs as to why social problems exist, there can be no question as to their magnitude in our society. The hard statistics bare this out. In a recent study it was revealed that the level of care received by individuals was based on their ability to pay, which leaves poorer individuals to a great disadvantage (Wenneker, Weissman, and Epstein, 1990). Further, The Department of Health and Human Services indicate that approximately (3.9) million people in this country are not covered by health insurance. More-over, the Statistical Abstract of the United States (1994) gives further proof of other social problems:

(1). Texas ranked number (10) in the nation for violent crimes committed in 1992. (806 per 100,000 population).

(2). Texas ranked number (13) in the number prisoners in 1992, (13 per 1,000 population) - Now ranks #1.

(3). Only (53.1%) of some ethnic groups completed four years of High School in 1993.

(4). 60% of family house holds with children in 1993 were headed by females only.

(5). The marriage rate for Texas (1992) was 10.4 per 1,000 population, but the divorce rate for the same year was 5.6 per 1,000 people.

Although the literature is replete with information relative to the American society as a whole, there is little data provided for smaller sections. It is relatively easy to obtain data on U.S., Sectional, State, County, and Cities. However, no standardized information is available for portions of counties or municipalities.

As a result of this situation, it is necessary for researchers to conduct investigations within these "subsections" to ascertain which social problems are perceived to be most significant within these domains.

Statement of Problem

Because only a limited amount of information exist in regard to these "subsections", an information void exist in regard to what the dominant social issues are in these small population pockets. It is this problem that has initiated this study. This problem is important because our society, although uniformed to some degree, is made up of many small areas which may have different characteristics, concerns, and problems. Moreover, it is important to ascertain if the various "subgroup" have the same or similar concerns in regard to the significance of the selected social problems.

Purpose of this Study:

Following are the principal reasons for conducting this study:

1). To address the concern of a college level Sociology class to participate in an empirical research project.

2). To identify which selected social problems are perceived to be most important to residents and other respondents in Northwest Harris County.

3). To ascertain what problems, other than those selected, are perceived to be significant social problems to respondents from Northwest Harris County.

Objectives of this Investigation

This investigation seeks to address several objectives. These are germane to the purpose of the study. The Objectives essentially were to determine the following.

1). What amount of significance is placed on violence in our society by Northwest Harris County Community Members?

2). What amount of significance is placed on crime in our society by Northwest Harris County Community Members?

3). What amount of significance is placed on Drug and Alcohol problems in our society by Northwest Harris County Community Members?

4). What amount of significance is placed on Public Education issues in society by Northwest Harris County Community Members?

5). How significant are problems pertaining to Public Health issues as perceived by Northwest Harris County Community Members?

6). Are there any relationships between various demographic variables and the level of significance they place on selected social problems?

7). What amount of significance is placed on problems that pertain to the family by Northwest Harris County Community members?

8). What other social problems to members of this community perceive to be significant, but are not addressed in the survey.

Variables of Interest

Throughout the course of this investigation several variables were measured and subjected to various statistical test and procedures. These variables comprised two categories; Demographic and Non-demographic. The Non-demographic variables are the variables of interest, and those variables include social problems that are related to: Violence, Crime, Public Education, Drug/Alcohol, Public Health, and the Family.

Target Population: The population of interest in this study was Northwest Harris County. The geographic location is bordered by the Spring Creek on the North; the Interstate Ten Highway on the South; the County line on the West; and Interstate Highway Forty-five on the East. A copy of the geographic map is offered in the Appendex.

Sample: The sample consisted of (150) respondents who were randomly selected from the population of Northwest Harris County. The sample included a broad range of respondents and was very heterogeneous. The sample size was determined by a formula which was computed to ascertain how many respondents would be required to maintain an error rate (interval size) of ± 8%. Following is the formula used to find the sample size.

$$N = \frac{(Z^2)\,(P_u)\,(1-P_u)}{(.08)^2} = 150$$

N = Sample size (Unknown)
Z = Z-Score associated with 5% Alpha Level (1.96)
Pu = Population proportion (.50 - A Constant)
$(.08)^2$ desired interval or (± error rate)
In this study the percentage is (.08) or 8%.

According to Joseph F. Healey (1984), this formula is acceptable to estimate sample size and error percentages. Establishing an acceptable sample size as well as a reasonable margin of error was of significant importance to the researcher early on in this investigation. Following, Figure I, illustrates the demographic characteristics of the sample selected for this study.

FIGURE I

(Demographic Profile)

		Percentage			Percentage
Sex:	Male - 67	(44.67)	**Age:**	25 or less - 74	(49.33)
	Females - 83	(55.33)		26 - 35 - 40	(26.67)
				36 - 45 - 23	(15.33)
				46 - 55 - 05	(3.33)
				55 - over - 08	(5.33)

Marital Status:		%	**Income:**		%
Married	-45	(30.)	$25,000 - less - 83		(55.33)
Single	-86	(57.33)	$26 - 35,000 - 30		(20.00)
Divorced	-14	(9.33)	$36 - 45,000 -15		(10.)
Separated	- 02	(1.33)	$46 - 55,000 - 11		(7.33)
Widow/Widower	- 03	(2.00)	$55,000 - over - 11		(7.33)

Ethnicity:		%	**Educational Attainment:**	%
White:	- 100	(66.67)	Less than H.S. Graduate	- 7 (4.67)
Black	- 14	(9.33)	H.S. Graduate	- 22(14.67)
Hispanic:	- 20	(13.33)	Some College	- 82(54.67)
Other:	- 16	(10.67)	B.A./B.S. Degree	- 26(17.33)
			Grad/Prof. Degree	- 13 (8.67)

N = 150

RESEARCH DESIGN: This study is a descriptive study. The study was intended to describe the responses of this sample. Walter R. Borg and Mereth Gall (1989), indicate that descriptive studies are use to show "what is". Further, George Ferguson (1981), indicates that "Statistical procedures used in describing the properties of samples, or of populations where complete population data are available, are referred to as descriptive research statistics."

Moreover, it was necessary to utilize some inferential statistics in this study to extend sample findings to the target population (Northwest Harris County). Only statistics which are significant at the (5%) Level or better have been reported in this study. Based on the objectives of this investigation, descriptive statistics are well suited.

Limitations of this study:

This study was carried out within the boundaries of certain limitation. All data collected from this study; all analysis that is based on this data; and all findings derived from those analysis are limited to the following.

(A). Information gathered from the Northwest Harris County Community obtained by the research instrument (S-25384).

(B). Information gathered between the period of September 15th, 1995 and November 15th, 1995.

(C). To the target population identified in another part of this paper and which is described in the appendices section by a map. This area is known as Northwest Harris County, Texas.

(D). The responses provided by the sample on the "S-25384" during the study.

Definition of Terms

For this study, the following terms have been operationalized as follows:

Northwest Harris County: Members of the population who live, work, go to school, or otherwise frequent the geographic location as described in the population section of this study on a regular basis.

Social Problem: A condition or situation that negatively effects or threatens the morals, values, beliefs, or quality of life of individuals, and most people agree that something should be done to stop, resolve, or solve that condition or situation.

Instrument:

The survey instrument used for this study was the "S-25384". This instrument was used as a social problems perception assessment. The selected items included on the survey were: Violence, Crime, Public Education, Drug Problems, Public Health issues, and Problems related to the Family. An open-ended question was added to ascertain what problems respondents are concerned about but were not included on this survey.

The items were chosen by the class, because they appeared regularly in the current issues of most social science text books, including the one used by this class; "Society in Focus", and because of the devastating statistics relative to these issues in the Statistical abstract. The Instrument name "S-25384" was given by the members of the Sociology 1306 class. The "S" stands for Sociology and the numbers 25384 is the CRN number given on the class schedule for this class. Each variable was measured on an interval scale which ranged from (1-5).

Validity and Reliability of "S-25384"

After survey items were written, and the instrument was developed, it was given to (10) individuals who are Social Science Professional (i.e., Instructors and Researchers). The panel graded the survey for both face and content validity. Each individual rated the instrument on a whole from 1-10; the highest summed total is (100). The instrument received on overall rating of (85). After receiving the validity values, the instrument was then tested in a pilot study using the split half method. The items were divided into even and odd items. According to Borg and Gull (1984), Split half reliability is an accurate method to establish reliability. The coefficient for the two halves was (.58). When the Spearman-Brown correction formula was applied the coefficient was found to be (.73). It is the common belief of most professional researchers that a coefficient of (.70) is acceptable (Bronie and Kintz, 1969). The standard error of measurement was found to be (2.30).

Statistical Methods:

The statistical procedures used in this study included:

1). The Point Biserial Correlational Method
2). Pearson Correlational procedure
3). The Analysis of Variance (Anova)
4). Scheffe's post hoc test
5). Various tables, Charts, etc.

Section II

DATA ANALYSIS

The study focused on (6) variables perceived to be social problems by respondents. Specifically those variables of interest were those dealing with:

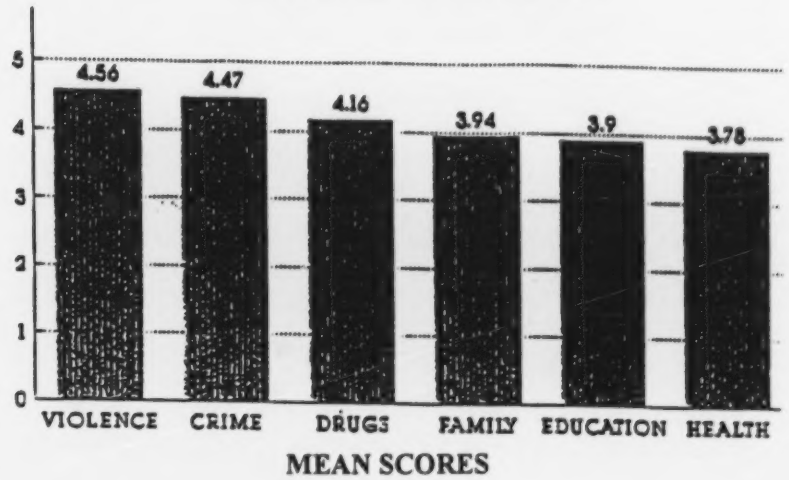
(1). Violence
(2). Crime
(3). Public Education
(4). Drug Problems
(5). Public Health
(6). Family Problems

Table I, reveals the overall results of the (6) variables.

Variable Name	Size	Mean	Sample STD Dev	Sample Variance
Violence	150	4.56	.66028	.43597
Crime	150	4.473333	.76585	.58653
Public Education	3.9	3.9	.9676	.93624
Drug Problems	150	4.16	.88295	.7796
Public Health	150	3.786667	1.03358	1.06828
Family Problems	150	3.94	.93572	.87557

Figure II, illustrates the rank order of the six selected social problems. Note that the respondents ranked every social problem above the midpoint of (3) on the interval scale (1-5).

Figure II shows results on Bar Graph
Social Problems in rank order



As can be observed in Table II, all six of the variables were perceived to be important by the respondents. The survey instrument utilized an interval scale ranging from (1-5), all of the (6) variables received mean scores above the midpoint (3) of that scale. The variable that was perceived to be most significant as a social problem was Violence (4.56) and the variable seen as the least significant as a social problem appears to be Public Health problems (3.79).

When the (6) variables were compared using the one-way repeated measures analysis of variance to test for a significant difference, an F-ratio of (27.28) was revealed. This was found to be significant at the (0.0001) level. Table II, illustrates the (Anova) summary and Table III, shows the Scheffe', "post hoc" test. The Scheffe' illustration shows where the differences lie among those variables which are significantly different. All comparisons based on (.01 or .05) probability levels.

Table II

Anova Summary Table

Source	Sum Squares	DF	Mean SQRES	F-Ratio	Prob
Between Groups	77.02223	5	15. 40445	27.28271	<.0001
Within Subject	277.7956	149	1.8644		
Error	420.6441	745	.56482		
Total	775.4619	899			

ETA SQUARED = .45756

Table III
Comparisons of Mean Scores of
Selected Variables with Scheffe' Test

SCHEFFE COMPARISONS

	7 Vio.	8 Crime	9 Public Edu	10 Drug Prob
Violence	0	.19955	11.57288**	4.25083**
Crime	.19955	0	8.73309**	2.60836*
Public Education	11.57288**	8.73309**	0	1.79597
Drug Problems	4.25083**	2.60836*	1.79597	0
Public Health	15.88866**	12.52696**	.34125	3.70294
Family Problems	10.21262**	7.55703**	.04251	1.28587

** p<.01 * p<.05

SCHEFFE COMPARISONS - Continued

	11 Public Health	12 Family Problems
Violence	15.88866**	10.21262**
Crime	12.52696**	7.55703**
Public Education	.34125	.04251
Public Health	0	.62464
Family Problem	.62464	0

****p<.01 *p<.05**

Of particular interest in this data was the homogeneity of variance among most of the distributions. The scores of respondents on each item seem to "hover" closely about the mean of that distribution as can be observed in Table IV.

Table IV

Variable	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	S.D.	Median
Violence	4.56	.66	5
Crime	4.47	.765	5
Public Education	3.9	.968	4
Drug Problems	4.16	.88	4
Public Health	3.79	1.03	4
Family Problem	3.94	.94	4

Moreover, it was discovered that several of the variables had mild relationships. The highest or strongest relationship was between Crime and Violence (.60 < .01). This is to say that respondents who scored high or low on one variable also respondent likewise on the other. The co-efficient of determinations ($r^2 = .36$) indicates that 36% percent of the respondents score on one variable is prompted by their score on the other. (See Correlation Matrix, Table V).

Table V

Correlation Matrix for Selected Variables

CORRELATION MATRIX (r)

	7 Violence	8 Crime	9 Public Edu	10 Drug Problems
Violence	1	.60043**	.10433	.2482**
Crime	.60043**	1	.14064	.44305**
Public Education	.10433	.14064	1	.20806*
Drug Problems	.2482**	.44305**	.20806*	1
Public Health	.1959*	.22169**	.33852**	.4642**
Family Problems	.10906	.15228	.28857**	.34475**

**p<.01 *p<.05

CORRELATION MATRIX (r) - Continued

	11 Public Health	12 Family Problems
Violence	.1959*	.10906
Crime	.22169**	.15228
Public Education	.33852**	.28857**
Drug Problems	.4642**	.34475**
Public Health	1	.36835**
Family Problems	.36835**	1

**p<.01 *p<.05

When the responses for the two highest rated social problems and the two lowest rated social problems were analyzed (Violence, Crime/Public Health, and Public Education respectively), it was revealed that women perceived Crime and Violence to be more of a problem than did men. Further, when Public Health and Public Education was broken down by sex it was found that women rated Public Health more of a problem than did men, and Public Education was rated higher by men than by women respondents.

Table V (Violence)

Men responses	$(\bar{X}) = 4.37$	-	Variance = .695	- ^{N} = 67
Women responses	$(\bar{X}) = 4.71$	-	Variance = .495	- ^{N} = 83
Overall Mean	$(\bar{X}) = 4.56$	-		- N = 150

Table VI (Crime)

Men responses	$(\bar{X})$	= 4.38	-	Variance = .834 - ^{N} = 67
Women responses	$(\bar{X})$	= 4.54	-	Variance = .703 - ^{N} = 83
Overall Mean	$(\bar{X})$	= 4.47	-	- N = 150

Table VII (Public Health)

Men responses	$(\bar{X})$	= 3.53	-	Variance = 1.247 - ^{N} = 67
Women responses	$(\bar{X})$	= 3.99	-	Variance = .772 - ^{N} = 83
Overall responses	$(\bar{X})$	= 3.79	-	- N = 150

Table VIII (Public Education)

Men responses	$(\bar{X})$	= 3.91	-	Variance = .840 - ^{N} = 67
Women responses	$(\bar{X})$	= 3.87	-	Variance = 1.03 - ^{N} = 83
Overall Mean	$(\bar{X})$	= 3.89	-	- N = 150

When these same variables (two highest rated and two lowest rated) where examined by the various age and ethnic groups the following was revealed.

1). All categories of age and ethnic groups appear to have similar perceptions in regard to Violence as a serious social problem. (4.28 was the lowest mean among these two groups).

2). All categories of age and ethnic groups also fell strongly about Crime. The lowest mean among the two groups was (4.3). The overall mean score for the variable Crime was (4.47).

3). Although problems with Public Health was the lowest rated Social Problem ($\bar{X}$=3.78), Blacks perceived it to be a greater social problem than the other ethnic groups ($\bar{X}$=4.07). The average responses for this group was considerably higher than the overall average from all other groups, (4.07 vs. 3.79). Moreover, when this variable was broken down by age group, it was revealed that the age group (46-55) scored highest ($\bar{X}$ = 5); the second highest age group was those within the (55 and over group). This group had a mean score of (4.25). The group that perceived Public Health to be least significant as a social problem was the youngest age group (25 or less), that mean score was (3.62).

The variable "Public Education", was also broken down by age, sex, and ethnic groups, the results of these comparisons were also interesting. When broken down by sex it was discovered that men's perception of Public Education as a social problem was slightly higher than women's (3.91 vs. 3.87). Also, the ethnic group labeled "Other" perceived Public Education more of a problem than all other ethnic groups ($\bar{X}$ = 4.06), the overall mean was (3.89). Blacks appeared to see Public Education as a social problem the least ($\bar{X}$ = 3.7). The age group (46-55) reported the highest score for Education as a social problem (4.8), and those 55 and over reported the second highest mean score ($\bar{X}$ = 4.25). The lowest mean score for Public Education as a social problem fell within the age category (25 or less, $\bar{X}$ = 3.68).

Drug/Alcohol problems was ranked as the third highest social problem, the mean score was (4.16). The most interesting facts about the responses of this variable are as follows:

1). There did not appear to be a major difference in the perceptions of men and women as to the importance of Drugs/Alcohol problems. The mean scores for sex were (M = 4.15, and W = 4.16).

2). When broken down by age groups it was found that the older the respondent the greater they perceived this problem to be. See following summary:

25 or less	($\bar{X}$ = 4.09)
26 to 35	($\bar{X}$ = 4.1)
36 to 45	($\bar{X}$ = 4.21)
46 to 55	($\bar{X}$ = 4.6)
55 and over	($\bar{X}$ = 4.625)
Overall mean =	**(4.16)**

3). When the various education groups were analyzed, it was discovered that the respondents who had less than a High School education saw Drugs/Alcohol to be more of a social problem than the other education groups ($\overline{X} = 5$). The group that perceived it to be the least of a problem was the group with the highest level of education on the survey, (Graduate/Professional Degree).

4). The ethnic group identified as "Other" perceived Drugs/Alcohol to be very significant as a social problem ($\overline{X} = 4.38$), and Whites perceived it to be less of a problem than all other ethnic groups ($\overline{X} = 4.1$).

5). The respondents in the income group of $55,000 and over perceived Drug/Alcohol to be more of a social problem than the other income groups ($\overline{X} = 4.5$) and the income group with the lowest perception of Drug/Alcohol as a social problem was those respondents who reported incomes between ($36, 000 - $45,000) their mean score was (3.8).

Finally, when respondents were ask to indicate their perceptions of the magnitude of Family Problems (all types) as a social problem an overall mean score of (3.94) was recorded. This was the (4th) rated social problem. Other interesting finds relative to this variable included:

1). Women and men appeared to see Family Problems as a significant social problem on an even scale. The mean scores were (M = 3.91 and W = 3.96). Women scored slightly higher, but not significantly so.

2). Among the various age groups those between (26- 35) perceived this to be a greater problem than the other age groups. Those over 55 seemed to rate Family Problems lower than others ($\overline{X} = 3.75$).

3). Those who were in the Divorced category of the Marital Status section rated Family Problems highest as a social problem than the other groups affiliated with Marital Status. People who were "separated" saw Family Problems the least important as a social problem.

4). Although the overall mean score for this variable was only (3.94), Blacks ($\overline{X} = 4.36$) rated Family Problems the highest as a social problem. The ethnic group that perceived Family Problems to be least significant as a social problem were Hispanics ($\overline{X} = 3.8$).

5). Among education groups, Family Problems were rated highest by respondents that had B.A./B.S. degrees and lowest by those with Graduate/Professional degrees.

Item #13: Social problems not included on this survey, which respondents perceive to be important.

Question #13 ask respondents to give (1) social problem that they believe to be significant, but is not mentioned on the survey. Ninety-one people responded to Question #13. The responses were broken down into (15) Categories. In cases were there was only one person identifying a particular social problem, that response was categorize as Miscellaneous which created another category. In all cases where there were two or more people giving the same response, a separate category was created for that social problem. The (16) Categories are shown below in rank order.

1. Racial Problems (24)
2. Problems pertaining to Social Services (8)
3. Lack of Religious Values (7)
4. Poor or ineffective GOVERNMENT Policies (7)
5. Teen Pregnancy (6)
6. Various types of Poverty (6)
7. Unemployment (3)
8. Child Abuse (3)
9. The Criminal Justice System (3)
10. The Environment (3)
11. Aids (3)
12. Corruption in Religious Organizations (3)
13. Poor Parenting (3)
14. Poor Communication between Social/Ethnic groups (2)
15. Miscellaneous (13)* only one response each.

The most significant number of responses fell within the "Racial Problems" category (24). Those responses had the following demographic characteristics.

Sex: Male - 14
Female - 10

Ethnicity: White - 20
Black - 2
Hisp. - 2

Age: 25 or Less - 14
26 - 35 4
36 - 45 4
46 - 55 1
over 55 1

Education: Less than HS - 0
H.S. Graduate - 2
Some College - 18
B.A./B.S. - 4
Grad/Prof. Degree - 0

Income: $25,000 or less 14
$26 to 35,000 4
$36 to 45,000 2
$46 to 55,000 2
over $55,000.....2

Section III

Findings and Conclusions

At the beginning of this investigation there were given eight objectives for which this endeavor was based. In this section we will again individually identify and address those objectives based on the findings of this study.

A). Objective #1: To ascertain what amount of significance is placed on Violence in our society by Northwest Harris County Community Members.

This variable was rated the most significant as a social problem by respondents (X = 4.56). Also, it appears that female respondents consider Violence to be more of a social problem than did men. Moreover, all comparison groups in this study (i.e. age, sex, ethnic groups, etc.) perceived Violence to be a serious social problem, and the variability among respondents was very low. This indicated that most responses were in close approclamation to the mean score; there was very little disagreement as to the significance of Violence as a social problem (Variance = .436 and standard deviation = .660). This variable, in fact, had the lowest sample variance and sample standard deviation of all the selected variables. Violence obviously is perceived to be one of the most significant social problems among this sample.

B). Objective # 2: To ascertain what amount of significance is placed on Crime in our society by Northwest Harris County Community Members.

When respondents were ask to indicate their perception of Crime as a social problem, it was second only to Violence as a social problem. Again the responses had very little variation from the mean (sample variance = .586 and sample standard deviation = .765). There were also several other interesting facts pertaining to this variable. One significant fact is that there was a positive relationship between responses on Violence and responses on Crime (.60). Although the relationship was only mild, it was significant at the (.01) level indicating that this relationship, or these perceptions, are very likely to be present in the target population of Northwest Harris County. Although there were other "mild" relationships among several of the variables, this relationship was the strongest. Also, it may be in order to mention again that women in this sample appear to feel slightly more stronger than men about Crime. Finally, as with Violence, when the various variables were broken down to different levels or categories, all categories rate Crime high as a social problem. Crime ranked only slightly lower than Violence. The difference in the means was a mere (.087).

C). Objective #3: To ascertain what amount of significance is placed on Drug and Alcohol problems in our society by Northwest Harris County Members.

The mean score for Drug/Alcohol problems was (4.16). Ranking number three in significance as a social problem, it appears that respondents of this sample perceive this to be a significant social problem. As shown in the Correlation Matrix, respondents, although only slightly, seem to relate Drug/Alcohol problems to all other social problems on this survey, based on their responses. All but one of these relationships (Drug/Alcohol - Public Education) were significant at the (.01) level. Those relationships are shown below:

Drug/Alcohol problems and Violence - $r = .25$ - $p < .01$
Drug/Alcohol problems and Crime - $r = .44$ - $p < .01$
*Drug/Alcohol problems and Public Educations - $r = .21$ - $p < .05$
Drug/Alcohol problems and Public Health - $r = .46$ - $p < .01$
Drug/Alcohol problems and Family Problems - $r = .35$ - $p < .01$

Based on the data, the strongest correlations are between Drug/Alcohol problems and Public Health (.46) and Crime (.44) both at the (.01) level. Interesting too was that people who had less than a High School education saw Drug/Alcohol problems as a greater social problem than all other groups. This group was the only group that rated this Social Problem (5) on a scale that ranged from (1-5).

D). Objective #4: To ascertain what amount of significance is placed on Public Education problems by Northwest Harris County Members.

Problems that pertain to Public Education received a mean score of (3.9). The respondents were instructed to address only problems pertinent to Elementary - High Schools. Public Education problems was one of the few situations where men responded higher than women, indicating that they see this more significant as a Social Problem than men. Also of interest was that Whites and Hispanics appeared to see problems in Public Education less of a social problem than all other ethnic groups in the sample.

E). Objective #5: To ascertain what amount of significance is placed on Public Health problems as perceived by Northwest Harris County Community Members.

Problems that are Public Health related received the lowest mean score (3.79) than any of the selected variables in this study. Relatively speaking, it was the lowest ranked social problem by the respondents in this sample. Even though this variable does rank low, there are some important facts in regard to this variable. First, women seemed to feel that this problem was more significant than the men included in this sample. Secondly, people between the ages of 46-55 rated this problem higher than any other age ($\overline{X} = 5$). The age group (55 and over) gave the second highest mean score (4.25) among the five age groups. Finally, among the various ethnic groups, Blacks appeared to perceived Public Health problems to be move significant than all other ethnic groups ($\overline{X} = 4.07$). Whites perceived it to be the least of a social problem ($\overline{X} = 3.73$) among the ethnic categories.

F). Objective # 6: To ascertain if any relationship exist between various demographic variables and their responses to selected social problems.

There were several "mild" relationships observed from the data. The relationship between violence and crime ($r = 60$) was the strongest, and it was significant at the (.01) level. There were only a few relationships between Demographic variables and responses on the Social Problem variables. Sex was correlated slightly with Public Health problems and Violence, and age was slightly correlated with Public Education problems ($r = .24$ $p < .05$) and Public Health problems ($r = .24$ $p < .05$). Statically speaking, there were only weak relationships observed between Demographics and the selected Social Problems.

G). Objective #7: To ascertain what amount of significance is placed on problems that pertain to the Family by Northwest Harris County Community.

The mean score for Family Problems was (3.94). This Social Problem was ranked 4th by respondents of this sample. Blacks as well as respondents between the ages of 26-35 over whelmingly seem to identify Family Problems a greater social problem than all other groups.

H). Objective # 8: To ascertain what other Social Problems respondents in this sample of the Northwest Harris County Community perceive to be important, but were not one of those included on the survey.

Clearly the social problem indicated here by the most respondents was problems that are racially related. Out of a total of (91) respondents who answered this item, (24) or (26%) gave responses of this nature. There were many ties, and the other categories where all had fewer responses than (24). After Racial problems came Social Services Problems, Lack of Religious Values; ineffective Government Programs; and Teen Pregnancy.

Note: The Analysis of Variance Test ($F = 27.28$ $p < .0001$) indicates that there is a "statistically significant" difference among the Social Problem means, and that those differences observed did not merely occur by chance. Further, it indicates that it is highly probable that what is illustrated by the various means of this sample would also occur in the population of Northwest Harris County, Texas.

The Scheffe' "post hoc" test computed, goes a step further to statistically identify which pairs of variables are significantly different in the population of Northwest Harris County. To reiterate the rationale of this "post hoc" test; it identifies the variables that are statistically significantly different from "o", and calculates the probability level (.01 or .05). The Scheffe' provided the data in the following table.

Violence &	**Crime &**	**Public Ed. &**
Public Health----(15.9 - **)	Public Ed.----(8.73 - **)	Violence----(11.57 - **)
Fam Problems ---(10.21 - **)	Drug Prob ---(2.6 - *)	Crime -------(8.7 - **)
Public Ed. -------(11.57 - **)	Public Health-(12.53 - **)	
Drug/Alcohol ---(4.25 - **)	Family Prob --(7.56 - **)	

Drug Problems &	**Public Health &**	**Family Problems &**
Violence ---------(4.25 - **)	Violence ------(15.89 - **)	Violence --(10.21 - **)
Crime ------------(2.60 - *)	Crime ---------(12.52 - **)	Crime -----(7.55 - **)

** p< .01 * p< .05

Section IV

Appendix

1. Survey Instrument
2. Pilot Study Data
3. Map of Target Area
4. Students summaries of possible reasons for some of the findings of this study.
5. References

• Each Student has written a short explanation as to why they think we obtained some of the results in this study. Every student addresses a different issue.

S-25384

(Social Problems Perception Assessment)

This assessment instrument was designed to measure individuals' perceptions of the significance or importance of several selected social issues. Data obtained from this study will be analyzed and used to enhance our understanding of which social problems the community perceives to be most significant. No information given on this survey will be used for anything other than that purpose.

Part I: Directions: Put a check mark in the bracket which corresponds to the answer that you chose.

1. Sex: [ ] Male
[ ] Female

2. Age: [ ] 25 years or less
[ ] 26 to 35 years
[ ] 36 to 45 years
[ ] 46 to 55 years
[ ] 55 years of age or over

3. Marital Status: [ ] A. Married
[ ] B. Single
[ ] C. Divorced
[ ] D. Separated
[ ] E. Widowed/Widower

4. Income: [ ] 25 or less
[ ] 26 to 35,000
[ ] 36 to 45,000
[ ] 46 to 55,000
[ ] 55 or more

5. Ethnicity:
[ ] White
[ ] Black
[ ] Hispanic
[ ] Other - Please Specify_____

6. Education Attainment:

[ ] Less than H.S. Graduate
[ ] Graduated from High School
[ ] Some College
[ ] B.A./B.S. Degree
[ ] Graduate/Professional Degree

Part II: Directions: Read the following social issues then Circle the number below it which you feel indicates the magnitude or significance of each issue in regard to it being a social problem; (1) being not very significant as a social problem and (5) indicating highest level of significance as a social problem.

7. Violence in our society (all types)
   1 2 3 4 5

8. Crime in our Society (all types)
   1 2 3 4 5

9. Public Education (Elementary through High school)
   1 2 3 4 5

10. Problems that are drug related (including alcohol)
    1 2 3 4 5

11. Public Health issues and problems (all types)
    1 2 3 4 5

12. Problems that pertain to the family (all types)
    1 2 3 4 5

13. Please write one (1) Issue or concern that You feel is a social problem, but was not mentioned on this survey. Write your answer below.

Pilot Sample Profile - Validity, Reliability, and Demo

Sex:
Male 14
Female 28
N = 42

Age:
25 or less - 7
26 - 35 - 15
36 - 45 - 8
46 - 55 - 7
55 and over - 5
N = 42

Marital Status:
Married - 16
Single - 14
Divorced - 11
Separated - 0
W/W - 1
N = 42

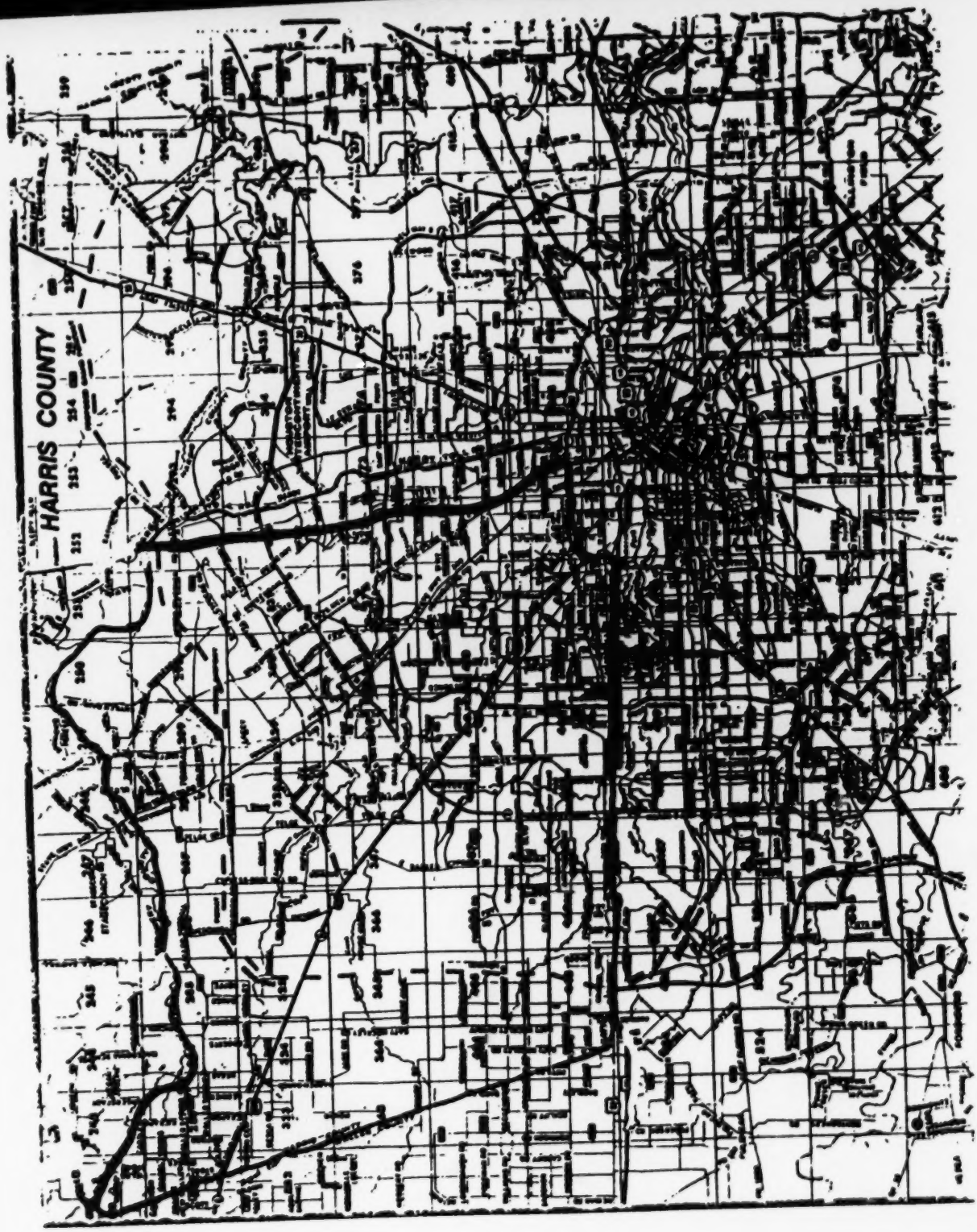
Income:
25,000 & less - 17
26 - 35,000 - 11
36 - 45,000 - 6
46 - 55,000 - 3
55 & more - 5
N = 42

Ethnicity:
White - 18
Black - 14
Hispanic - 8
Other - 2
N = 42

Education AHM
Less than HS - 0
H.S. Graduate - 6
Some College - 30
B.A./B.S. Deg - 4
Grad/Prof. Deg - 2
N = 42

,S - 25384

Validity value = (Total value = 85 - out of 100)
Reliability coefficient = .73
S E M = 2.3



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SOCIAL PROBLEMS SURVEY RESPONSE QUESTION
NUMBER 12

PROBLEMS THAT PERTAIN TO THE FAMILY

by

EMAL SHARAF

The age group of 26-35 may score the family problems higher because they are just starting a family. They have usually just married and do not know how to discipline their children so that they will do the right thing when they grow up and start their own family. They may experience greater strain because of their conflicts between work and family life. They think if they do not work and bring home the income to support the family then their children may inherit the same role, the children may think why should I bring home money to support may children when my parents did not do the same for me when I was young. Compared to the other age groups, most of the 55 and over age groups children have already moved on and have their own families. Therefore, they may not think that family is such a social problem in comparison to drugs or crime because that is what they hear about more since they have no children to take home. Age groups 25 and less may not even have a family yet. They may be in school and getting ready to start their own families so they do not think that family is very important to them at this time in order to achieve their goals.

The only group that did score close to the score of the 26-35 age group would be age group 46-55. The reason that they may be giving such a high score would be that they may be worried about their own future. They may be thinking about who is going to take care of them when they retire. That may be why they think that the family is such a significant topic. In age group 36-45 the score to the question was a 3.86 which was the same as the age group 25 and less. This might be because they have pretty much already

In the study of Social Problems in North West Harris County the age group of 26-35 gave the highest score to question number five compared to the other four age groups. The age group of 26-35 rated problems that pertain to the family as a 4.15 in a scale of one (Lowest or not very significant as a social problem) to five (Highest level of significance as a social problem). This is all do to the continuous undergoing of change because most of the age group is constantly adapting to a "family cycle" of development in which the family is constantly changing.

One of the reasons that this average was so high was maybe because of the ethnicity results. In the survey there were more blacks then any of the other ethnic groups. Furthermore, there were more black women then black men. In another study it was estimated that 86% of black children would spend some time in a mother-only environment or household compared to only 42% of white children. Therefore, since there were more black females in our survey then black men they might be single and have a higher rating of the problems with the family.

Other reasons which might have caused people in age group 26-35 to score family problems higher is that age group may have a family compared the other groups. For example, there is more of a chance that a 29 year old has a child compared to a nineteen year old. Others may say this is not true compared to the other age groups, but age group 26-35 may be just starting a family compared to age group 55 and over who's children have already moved out and are carrying on their own lives.

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figured out all the problems that they had with their family and taken care of them.

In conclusion, the reason which I think the age group of 26-35 scored so high on problems that pertain to the family would be that they are starting their own family. They may need help in getting through those years of showing their children how to do the right thing and not the wrong. Also the ethnic make up of the respondents may have a great impact on our survey. The largest group was black and most of them were women. They may be having a hard time raising their children all by themselves and this may be their cry for help.

Sociology Study - S#25384

Dr. Clennis High

MWF 12-1 p.m.

Todd Miears

November 30, 1995

Why public education isn't being taken seriously

In every election, political candidates talk about public education and its importance. Voters love to hear about how schools are improving and children are learning more. Parents expect more from their kids because they supposedly are learning more in school. These factors have brought a largely indifferent view of public education.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development compiled a study comparing test scores from sixteen public school systems to similar scores from sixteen systems in Europe, Australia and Canada. The results showed that the U.S. students outperformed the students from twelve other nations. Added to that, the same study found that U.S. colleges, especially community colleges, do a better job of preparing students for a changing job market than do the similar institutions in the other nations studied (cited in Celis, 1993).

Over ninety percent of all American children between the ages of 5 and 19 are enrolled in school. Also, seventy five percent of adolescents remain in class full time through the final year of secondary school (Kominski, 1987). On top of

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that, the number of students enrolled in higher education has increased rapidly in this century (Trow, 1966).

Another factor that affects our opinion of the public schools is the amount of money we spend on education. A study found that the United States spends an average of $13,630 per year on each college or university student. Averages from other countries are much lower ranging between $6,000 to $7,000 (Celis, 1993).

Another theory is brought up Education Secretary, Richard W. Riley. Above and beyond the statistics already listed, he believes that "the American habit of becoming comfortable comes up short in the new global economic environment" (quoted in Celis, 1993).

The American education system is not perfect. Some believe that major renovations need to be done. Four possible reasons have been listed as to why, according to the study presented, the majority of people believe it to be sufficient.

Why I Think Violence Ranked Highest

by

Jennifer McMath

Sociology 1306

November 26,1995

Violence, the behavior designed to inflict injury to people or damage to property, was rated highest in our survey. It ranked higher than crime, public education, drug related problems, public health, and family related problems.

Our survey was based on a scale of one (not very significant) to five (very significant). The overall average for violence was 4.56. Men averaged in at 4.37, and women at 4.71.

I believe that violence was ranked higher than all others because the surveyed believe that people now are being raised in a society where violence is very visual. What I mean by visual is that you can see it on t.v. or in the newspaper everyday.

On the t.v., there are reports of homicide, robbery, rape, abuse, and even death from violence. Social issues, such as public health and public education are not as common on the t.v. as violence is. Another source of the mass media is the newspaper. it is full of reports of violence.

Of everything watched on t.v., I would have to say that much of it is very violent. Even cartoons contain violence. "...large segments of the American public are increasingly convinced that there is a connection between high levels of televised violence programming and aggressive behavior by viewers of such programs." (S.P., 219)

Murders and homicides are another factor that can inflict fear into people. One person dies every 68 seconds due to violence. (Social Problems, 199) Many of these acts are committed with weapons. Handguns are the number one weapon used in murders. (S.P., 217) Handguns are very common among houses in our society. People have them in their homes for their protection.

Another reason that violence was ranked highest could be the fact that many forms of violence are everyday occurrences. For example, sports such as football and hockey are very violent and watched by many people.

Gangs may be another reason people believe violence is a very significant problem in our society. Gangs are growing larger in our society everyday. Gangs are seen by many people, in school and on the streets. Gangs fight with each other to try to see who can rule over the other, or to obtain rights to certain areas of the city.

Some of the people who we surveyed may even be violence sufferers themselves. Abuse, physical or verbal, affects many people in our society. There are hotlines for this kind of violence, but many occurrences go unreported.

Another form of violence that is often heard of is bashing. This includes gay bashing, granny bashing, and ethnic bashing.

Rape is probably the most feared violent crime there is, whether it be forcible, statutory, or date rape.

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Rape is not only inflicted on women, men are also victims of this violent act.

In my opinion, violence in our society is due to the mass media. The is no more violent exposure than on the t.v. and in the news. They show who did it, what they did, and how they did it. In a way, they are just showing how to commit the perfect crime, and how to get away with it.

Amy Holmes
Dr. Clennis High
Sociology 1306
Dec. 1, 1995

In our survey crime ranked second highest just under violence. Why is crime ranked so high? The FBI Crime Clock seems to say it all, there is one offense every two seconds. That breaks down into one violent crime every twenty two seconds and one property crime every three seconds. As the French sociologist Emile Durkheim pointed out, wherever there are people and laws, there are crime and criminals.

One reason why crime may be rising is the introduction of new categories of crime. As society advances so does the criminal. A few of the different types of crime that we experience are: violent personal crime, occasional property crime, white-collar crime (embezzlement and fraud), corporate crime, public order crime, conventional crime, organized crime, professional crime, and juvenile delinquency.

Age also plays a factor in the crime rates. Teenagers and young adults account for over half of all arrests in the United States. Since we have an influx of teens and young adults it only stands to reason that crime will go up when the babies become teens and young adults.

Biological factors have been studied to determine whether or not the origins of the criminal are inherited

through their DNA and also to see if certain body types were more inclined to be criminals. Gender and age were studied and found to play a significant role. Men are raised to be more aggressive although women in jail are on the rise. As it was stated earlier age plays a very important role. Fortunately, many criminals seem to settle down in their late twenties and early thirties.

The conflict theory states that crime is on the rise because of the inequalities of wealth, status, and power. The funtionalist view, based on the anomie theory, believes that crime is a result of the disparity between goals and the methods used to achieve them. Interactionists say that criminal behavior is learned.

Efforts to control crime have been implemented but the majority of the programs take more time and effort then the citizens are willing to give. The four basic forms crime prevention methods are retribution-deterrence, rehabilitation, prevention, and reform of the criminal justice system.

Crime will never be completely eradicated but as long as tax payers are willing to work and spend their money then the rising crime rate can be slowed if not stopped.

The Sexes Finally Agree!
Public Schooling is Failing
By: Brian Grogg

After conducting a one hundred fifty person random survey pertaining to six questions concerning modern day societal problems, some surprising conclusions were reached. Various participants were asked to rate six modern day concerns on a scale from one to five. One being a problem of least concern and five being considered a top priority. One question asked, pertained to whether or not public education (Elementary through High School) was considered a trouble spot in modern day society. The results were relatively equal for both male and female perspectives. The male survey average was 3.92 which was slightly higher then the females average of 3.87. Both sexes show a general dissatisfaction with public schooling, but men seem to look more negatively upon this issue than women.

In today's society there is an increasing amount of single parent families, the majority of which tend to have the female with responsibility over the children. Because of this certain conclusions can be reached. Men being left without the responsibility of taking care of children still pay the taxes for local public schooling as well as child support. In many cases this leads a feeling of not seeing what you paid for initially. What they might see is the media's portrayal of often times intercity public schools, and therefore creating a stereotype of public school as being a negative place. The same holds true for single parent women, who must intrust their child to the school for the day while she goes out to support the household. Again taxes and one-sided media propaganda turns poor low-funded elementary school into Horror High.

Well what about married couple families? Married coupled families in most cases share the same feelings. Again, the role of the male traditionally is that of the sole income provider. Granted

their are exceptions to every rule, but generally it all comes down to money, who makes it, and the media showing you how your money is being spent.

Take a look back at the comparative statistics and notice the scale by which the survey was taken. It doesn't take much to see that the American populous is unhappy with the public schooling system. Even ethnically broken down the numbers all range within the average of about a four on the rating scale. Hispanics being the lowest at 3.8 and Blacks topping off the survey with an average of 4.38.

In conclusion however, I have a different question. If so many of our U.S. citizens are displeased with the local schooling, what are they doing about it. Maybe we should stop pouting and jumping on the media cheat shot band wagon and focus on working to better American schools. Who knows, maybe by taking care of this concern, might knock out a few other in the process.

"CRIME THROUGH A WOMAN'S EYES"

Heather L. Johnson
December 1, 1995
"Social Problems"
Dr. Clennis High
MWF 12-1

Heather L. Johnson
December 1, 1995
"Social Problems"
MWF 12-1

"Crime Through A Woman's Eyes"

A survey was taken from North West Harris County on all types of problems that affect our society. Crime was rated the second highest variable in the survey (Please refer to the Demo. section on this study). On a scale from one to five, the mean average for crime was 4.47 of the general population. The sample showed that women view crime as a larger problem in our society than the general population with a mean of 4.71.

Crime is "an act or omission of an act for which the state can apply sanctions" (William Kornblum / Joseph Julian, Social Problems p.555). According to the F.B.I's (Federal Bureau of Investigation) crime clock, every two seconds a crime takes place. One forcible rape occurs every five minutes. One aggravated assault occurs every twenty-two minutes. Out of a study of twenty-one hundred couples, 3.8% of the husbands had physically assaulted their wives within the previous twelve months (Strauss, 1977).

"It seems highly probable that girls, through their socialization in learning the traditional women's role, also learn that they have little direct control

over their lives no matter what they do. They learn that their voluntary responses really don't make much difference in what happens to them. Thus, it becomes extremely difficult for such women to believe their cognitive actions can change their life situation (William Kornblum / Joseph Julian Social Problems p. 213). As a woman do we stand in the dark shadows in fear of what lies ahead? Do we lock our doors and stay hidden? Do we live in fear of what may occur within our locked doors? Many women live daily in fear of the crime that occurs in their society, or in their own home.

Women view crime as a larger problem than the general population, this was demonstrated through the survey which was distributed to North West Harris County. The crime rate is constantly growing and so is the concern of the community. Women need not be a victim to the prey. It is so very important that women learn to protect themselves from crime as well as to prevent crime from occurring. Our attitude and actions can make a difference on how we view society and that which surrounds our society. Rape, burglary, car jacking, murder, ... etc., everyday in the newspaper or on the news we hear or read of a tragedy that has occurred. A change needs to be made, each of us can play a part in making this change. It is only when we all take hold of the crime harness will we capture

a piece of what is taking apart our society and began the process of feeling secure of what waits outside the safety and comfort of our homes.

ALLISON WICHKOSKI

"VIOLENCE"

SOCIOLOGY 12-1

DECEMBER 1, 1995

the highest out of the six social problems. In that category women rated higher than men.

The violence againest women act title IV responds to the needs of women who are victims of violence each year. Through the National Crime Victim Survey we know that nearly five million women experience violence annually, and more than 3 out of 4 victims knew their attackers.

Domestic violence is one of the main reasons why women rate higher than men in violence. In one study it showed that out of 2,100 couples 3.8 percent of the husbands had physically assaulted their wives within the previous year. More women die in their own bedroom than anywhere else, and one in every five murder victims is a women who has been killed by her spouse or lover (Lunde Pg. 207). It is estimated that more than two million women are victims of domestic violence. Each year between 2,000 and 4,000 women are beaten to death by their spouses, and twenty-five percent of all female suicides are proceeded by a history of battering (Reid,1991).

Another reason why women rated higher than men for violence is because more women fear for their lives opposed to men. Rape is one of the violent acts women fear. However women are not the only victims of this act, of violence, but it is more likely to happen to women more than ~~women~~ men. Victim studies show that the vast majority of forcible rapes are not reported to the police. A recent study found that 683,000 adult women

were raped in 1990, five times higher than the number of rape cases recorded in official reports (Johnston 1992). The study also found that 61 percent of the victims were under the age of 18, and that 22 percent had been raped by strangers. There are several types of rape, incuding date rape, statutory rape, and forcible rape. Date rape is forcible sex in which the victim is known to the offender. Studies found that 11 to 25 percent of college women have been in situations in which their boyfriends forced them to have sexual intercourse (Malamuth 1991). Statutory rape is the act of having sexual relations with a man or women who is below a particular age established by state law. Forcible rape is the act of forcing sexual intercourse on another person againest his or her will. All types of rape are extremely difficult to prove in a court of law.

In my conclusion I feel I have stated several reasons why women rated higher than men on violence. Domestic violence and any form of rape is very serious and should not be taken lightly. Any offender of these acts should face the maximum penalty for the such crime. Domestic violence as well as rape can affect the family including the children so it is best that the wife or women who get raped get help immediately.

Hispanic Families

by

Alan Rivas

Clenis High

Sociology

1 December 1995

Hispanic Families

The objective of our survey was to obtain an accurate result of what Americans perceived as the most significant social problem facing our society today. One hundred and forty-nine respondents were randomly selected from the Northwest Harris County area to participate in our survey. The participants were polled on the following social issues: violence, crime, public education, drugs and alcohol, public health, and problems that pertained to the family. The respondents rated each social problem on an interval scale of one through five, one not being very significant and five indicating the highest level of significance as a social problem. An interesting outcome of our survey is that problems that pertain to the family had a mean score of 3.93, but Hispanics, as a whole, placed less significance on a family problems as a significant social problem with a mean score of 3.8. A determinant of this result is due to the security and closeness of the Hispanic family.

To better comprehend how the Hispanic family structure would explain why Hispanics place less significance on family problems than Blacks or Whites, we must first understand different types of kinship groups. The nuclear family is the predominant kinship group in an industrial societies. The nuclear family consists of a father, mother, and the children living apart from other kin. In agrarian societies, the kinship group most commonly found is the extended family. The extended family consists of the parents, children, grandparents, aunt, uncle, and others living together or in a very close proximity. Increasingly, societies exhibit another type of kinship group known as the modified extended family, which the individual nuclear family lives separately, but the extended family remains as a strong kinship organization through a combination of interpersonal attachments among its members and various forms of economic

and mutual aid within the extended- family structure. Hispanics, as a whole, fall into the modified extended family kinship group.

To further explain why the Hispanics family structure is the modified extended family, we have to understand Hispanic immigration to the United States. The United States has had two waves of immigration. The first wave of immigrants is known as the old ethnic group, they are Europeans and Africans who were brought against their will. The second wave of immigrants is known as the new ethnic group, they are mainly from Asia and Latin America. The new ethnic group has been established in the late 1900's. Hispanics are the fastest growing immigrant group in the United States. In 1980, about one in five Americans claimed African, Asian, Hispanic, or Native American ancestry. By 1990, that figure jumped to one in four, with the greatest portion of the increase caused by the rapid increase in Latino immigration. Their recent immigration is significant in that it is a clue to why the Hispanic family structure is the modified extended family.

The significance of Hispanics recent immigration is that they are more rooted in their old culture than Whites and Africans. Hispanics have immigrated from an agrarian society, which the main kinship group is the extended family. Whites and African Americans have lived in the United States for such a long period of time that they have completely assimilated to the industrialized society and their kinship group is the nuclear family. Hispanics are slowly assimilating to the United States industrial society so their kinship group is changing from the extended family to the nuclear family. Their family structure resembles a nuclear family, but has the security of the extended family. Hispanics placed less significance on family problems as a social issue

because of the security the modified- extended family has. The Hispanic family is closer knit and very supportive of its family in times of need. In cases of divorce, the extended family members help the single parent raise and care for the children. There is some support in White and African families, but it is not as strong. Therefore, being that Whites and Africans have less security in there kinship groups, they place greater significance on family problems as a significant social issue.

In conclusion, Hispanics placed less significance on problems related to the family as a significant social issue because of their family structure. Hispanics are still heavily rooted in their cultural background because they are a new ethnic group and have not yet completely assimilated to the United States industrialized society. The agrarian extended family background gives Hispanics more security than Whites or African American families.

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Northwest Harris County Response to Public Health Questionnaire

The growing crisis with public healthcare and the self well being of society was found to be the least growing concern among individuals surveyed recently in Northwest Harris County. The survey was a simple survey, rating categories such as public health from 1 to 5. Respondents were asked to circle the appropriate response as to how they felt the categories listed affected them and the society they live in. Each response was then rated between 1 and 5 with 1 being the lowest, and least category affecting society and 5 being the highest, and most troublesome category affecting society. The final results indicated the lack of concern among Northwest Harris County residents to a growing health crisis in the United States.

The recent data collected indicated violence and public education were a more profound social problem than public health. In fact, the data also suggested that racial discrimination was more important than public health. This is quite significant, because racial discrimination was not a category on the survey. Rather, the responses were directly from individuals who answered a fill in the blank question as to what they feel is a social problem the survey should have listed. Another piece of empirical data was the second leading answer of the fill in the blank portion of the survey, which was AIDS. The respondents chose to answer the fill in the blank portion of the survey with the same response that could have been made on the survey under the category of public health. These results indicate the survey was somewhat broad and misleading under the umbrella of public health. However, the results also indicate the backseat public health takes to the categories on the survey.

The results of the survey indicate both AIDS and public health were among the least important categories on the survey. This data indicates that those surveyed are least affected by the epidemic of AIDS and the lack of proper medical and health care. The survey also indicated the income brackets of those surveyed and the findings were that most individuals ask to participate in the survey on average were making between $30,000 and $60,000 per year. The data collected therefore suggests that both results were related.

The relation between the ability to afford quality healthcare and the result that public health was the least important category on the survey, directly indicates that money plays a key role in the perception as to what is a social problem and what is not. Coincidentally, the results of violence and crime on the survey as the greatest perception of societal dysfunction suggest public health is a related branch of social problems, but rather than the uncertainty of encountering violence and crime, public health is an entity than can be controlled and contained. Thereby eliminating the risk of not living under the security of being provided for in the event of a health emergency. This security eliminates the worry of being affected by public health.

The results of this survey were conclusive to indicate public health was not a major concern among Northwest Harris County residents. These results may be a bit skewed for covering such a wide range of health issues, but according to the results of the survey, a breakdown of different health diseases would illicit the same results. The fact that AIDS was listed as the second most requested issue on the survey indicates some uncertainty about the disease and whether the disease could affect residents of Northwest Harris County, but the perception based on results of the survey, indicate fear of this disease is not a large concern. Both results are perceived only by residents of Northwest Harris County, but whether these perceptions of public health are an indication of the general perceptions of residents of the entire city of Houston, the state of Texas, or the entire population of the United States is unknown; however, the lack of concern for public health

in Northwest Harris County is ultimately a consequence of being financially secure to afford quality healthcare.

Drugs as a Social Problem

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Any substance that can chemically alter a persons biological state is a drug. Yet when most people think of drugs they think only of the illegal ones such as marijuana, cocaine, heroine, etc.. However the after work drink with friends, to the couple of sleeping pills before you go to bed are also drugs. When any of these "legal drugs" are used in an inappropriate way they can cause problems not only to the user but also to family, friends, and society as well. With so many things falling into the category of drugs is it any wonder that people ranked it so high as a social problem in our society.

One of the most widely used drugs in society is also one of the most widely accepted, alcohol. Thirty-three gallons of beer, 2.7 gallons of wine, and 2 gallons of hard liquor are consumed by the average adult American yearly (Statistical Abstract, 1993). Abuse of alcohol accounts for half of all highway fatalities a year as well as one-third of all homicides, drowning, and boating deaths (HHS, 1990). Alcohol can cause biological harm to the user as well by shorting life span, lowering immunity, and causing cirrhosis of the liver the eighth most frequent cause of death in the United States (Statistical Abstract, 1993). With all the obvious problems alcohol causes why is more not done to prevent its use? A functionalist might say because alcohol serves a function in our society and it is necessary. After dinner drinks with friends to communion at church all serve a useful purpose. It is only when someone abuses the function of alcohol that it becomes a problem in our society. Conflict theorist would say that alcohol can not be banned because the powerful alcohol companies have control over the politicians and therefore have control over us, the public.

The real problem isn't with alcohol, but with the people that abuse it. Seeking help through Alcoholics Anonymous and rehabilitation is part of solving the problem.

The abuse of illegal drugs is what most people think about when they think of drug related problems. Unfortunately it is a problem that is not getting better in our society but getting worse. A recent trend in 8th, 10th, and 12th graders shows that the use of marijuana has gone up. From 21.9 percent of high school senior having tried marijuana in 1992 to 30.7 percent having tried marijuana in 1994 (HHS NEWS, 1994). While this is alarming it

should be noted that this figure is lower compared to past years measured: in 1979 the percentage rate was 50.8 percent and in a ten year period from 1975 to 1985 the percentage was a little over 40 percent (HHS NEWS, 1994).

Most people would not find the illegal use of drugs a problem if it did not effect them in some way. The way that most people find the illegal use of drugs effecting them is drug related crimes. Since most drug habits are expensive some people are forced to resort to criminal activities to support their drug habits. This has led to an increase in crime rate and prostitution in some communities (Bourgois, Sterk, Williams, 1989). Also the sharp rise of innocent people involved in violent murders and shootings can also be attributed to drug dealings (Bourgois, Strek, 1989).

To combat the illegal use of drugs our government has waged a war on drugs. A war that we seem to be losing. Some people have suggested the "if we can't beat them, join them" attitude about drugs by suggesting we legalize drugs as they have done in some European countries. Others say this would be throwing in the towel, that by legalizing drugs we would encourage the use of drugs and create a bigger problem. What ever the answer might be it is obvious that something must be done before the problem gets any worse.

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